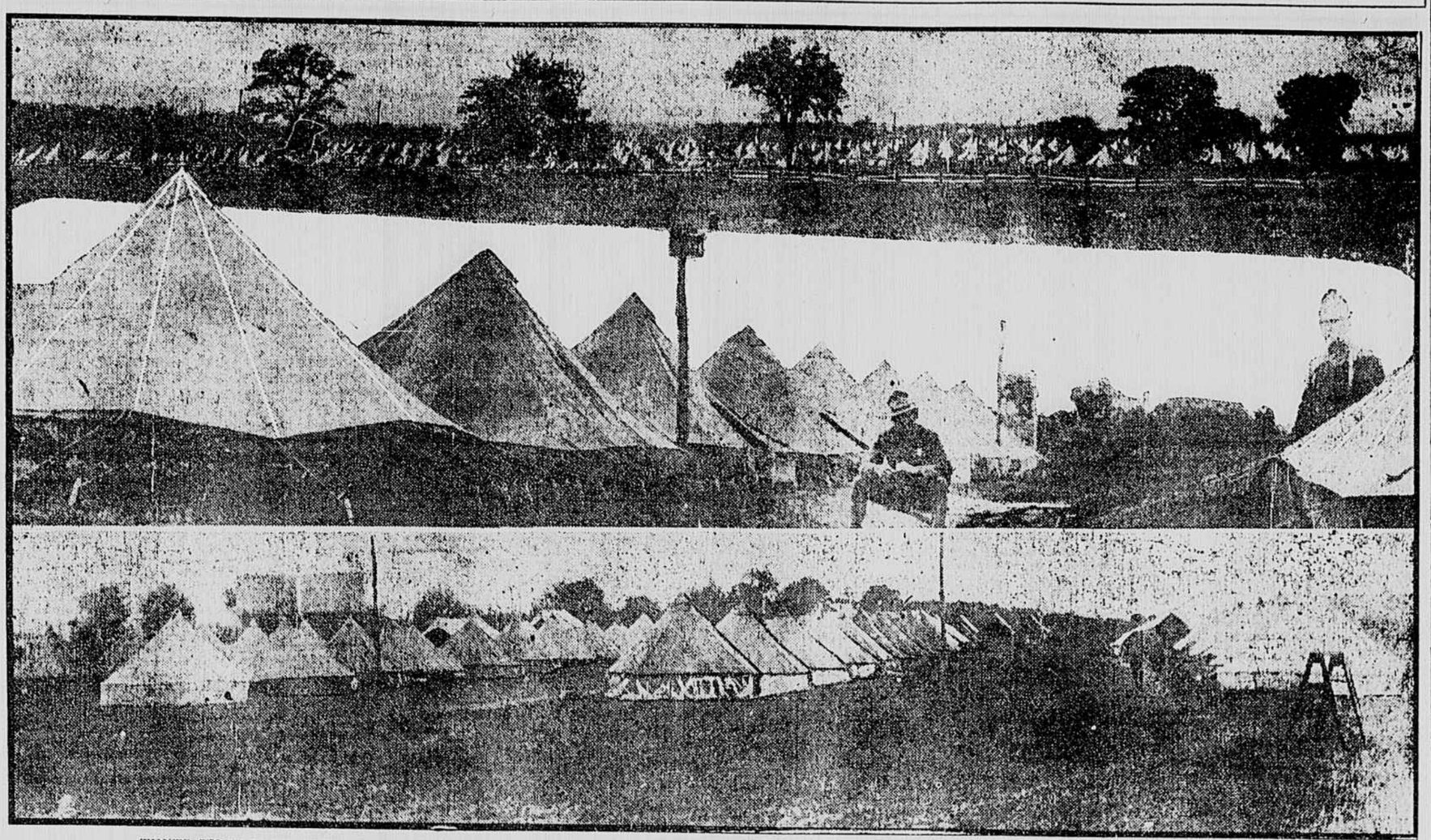
HALF CENTURY AFTER GETTYSBURG

MAKING READY TO CELEBRATE THE GETTYSBURG BATTLE ANNIVERSARY



TENTS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN PITCHED FOR THE USE OF THOUSANDS OF VETERANS WHO WILL GO TO THE BATTLEFIELD NEXT WEEK.

BY DR. DOUGLAS S. FREEMAN.

When the "tattoo" is echoed to-night over the hills about Gettysburg it will lull to sleep the vanguard of a great army of 50,000 men, including 2,500 Virginians, who will gather this week to commemorate on a blood-stained field "the high-water mark of American valor."

From every State of the South and from every quarter of the North and West will gather the veterans of the Gray and the old troopers of the Blue to meet on the field that both made immortal and to live again the dismal days of war which made the first week of July, 1863, the bloodiest and the most harrowing in the history of the American people. Fifty years after the event on a battlefield, which has become a great national park, the State of Pennsylvania and the government of the United States will entertain the veterans and give them every reminder of lasting peace where war once ruled.

Preparing for the Campaign.

The summer of 1863, which witnessed the great campaign in Pennsylvania, was ushered in by events which presaged Confederate victory. The long winter of 1862-63 had been spent by General Lee in recruiting his army and in placing it on the highest possible plane of military efficiency. The famous victories of 1862, beginning with the engagements on the Peninsula of Virginia and ending with the bloody repulse of the enemy at Fredericksburg, had aroused Southern valor to its greatest daring, and had given the people of the Confederacy new hopes of early independence. When the strengthened army of Lee dealt Hooker a crushing blow at Chancellorsville and sent him staggering back across the Rappahannock, Virginia was practically free from the enemy, and her defenders might deal a new offensive blow.

The Diplomatic Situation.

But the valor of the South, seeking an opportunity of striking back at the invaders, found a new stimulus in the hope that a crushing defeat to the Federals on their own soil might turn the balance of subtle diplomacy and might procure for the new nation the recognition of England. Once before President Davis had seen in Lee's Maryland campaign of 1862 a possible means to this end, and now, with fresh victory perched on the banners of Lee, he believed that one great defeat of the Federals on their own soil would lead England, and possibly France, to recognize the independence of the South. This, in turn, would mean the end of a "paper" blockade and the opening of Southern ports to the merchantmen of the world. A bold stroke it was and an enormous venture, but necessity justified it and hope prompted it.

Ready for the Advance.

Accordingly, General Lee gathered around Culpeper the most magnificent army he had ever commanded. From Suffolk came Longstreet with two divisions; Ewell was near-by with his seasoned veterans; A. P. Hill was tarrying at Fredericksburg to be sure the defeated Hooker dared not venture across the Rappahannock; the artillery was strengthened by batteries which had been scattered after Chancellorsville; the commissary was enlarged; a new wagon-train was formed. After mature deliberation, General Lee divided forces into three main corps under Ewell, Longstreet and A. P. Hill, ready for the advance.

The Missing Leader.

But in the councils held before the memorable advance began, Lee missed far more perhaps than he admitted even to President Davis, the advice and support of one lieutenant. A leader was missing, courageous beyond the strength of men in battle, but careful and farseeing in strategy. That leader was Jackson, whose saddle no man could fill once its owner had fallen mortally wounded in the twilight of the Chancellorsville forest. With that courtesy and consideration which marked his every act and word, Lee said little of his loss, but how he felt it his famous words after the Pennsylvania campaign attest.

The High Hopes of the Army.

High ran the hopes of the assembling brigades when it was whispered about that Pennsylvania was the destination of the army and a general forward movement its purpose. Men who had fought doggedly in defense of home swelled with pride to think that the day of retribution was at hand; boys who had forgotten their geography pored over tattered maps to learn how long it would take them to reach the great Quaker City. "We can lick 'em boys," was the unanimous verdict of every good soldier. With good hope came good cheer; uniforms were mended, band instruments were taken from battered cases, muskets were given a special cleaning, and "on to Yankeeland" was the cry.

The Strength of the Army.

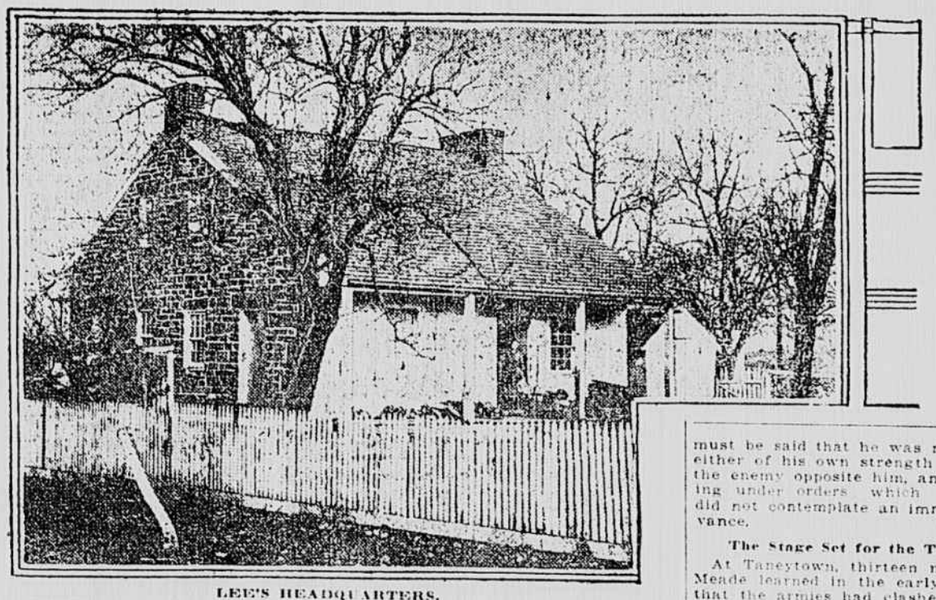
The strength of the army which Lee planned should participate in this great campaign has been variously estimated and much disputed. Northern historians of the day averred brazenly that Lee carried with him across the Potomac not less than 100,000 men, and later writers have insisted that the army numbered 90,000. As a matter of fact, the records show that Lee had available for service in the whole campaign—including the men he was forced to leave along the line—thirty-nine brigades of infantry, seven brigades of cavalry and 287 guns, all told. By the most liberal estimate this army did not aggregate more than 75,000 effectives, not 60 per cent of whom could be gathered for a single direct engagement. The Army of the Potomac, mustered to repel this force, included fifty-one brigades of infantry, eight brigades of cavalry and 370 guns. The whole could not have numbered less than 120,000, and the reported effective strength, 88,289, is a gross underestimate.

The Army's Great Weakness.

But on the forward movement, which became general by June 21, there was little thought of the army's weakness in men; veterans who had won victories against armies of twice their strength had learned to disregard the mere difference of numbers. What caused anxious forebodings on the part of those who knew the army was the great and fatal weakness of its train. Passing through a fruitful country, where no army had ever been, it was not difficult to purchase provisions for man and beast, but there was no way to strengthen the ordnance train. Whatever ammunition the army used had to be hauled west from Richmond by train, and thence up the Valley, over the Potomac and across Maryland by slow-moving wagons. A single day's hard fighting would deplete the ordnance train to the danger point; a brief campaign would exhaust it. So fatal was this weakness and so certain its appearance that one may truly say that victory would be lost not because of the enemy in front, but because of the wagons behind.

Into Pennsylvania.

The movement into Pennsylvania, however, was marked by omens of victory which threw into the background the weakness of Lee's artillery train. Sweeping down the Valley with vigor and dash, Ewell "gobbled up," in Lincoln's homely phrase, the army of Milroy, which opposed him, and, at the loss of 269 men, captured 4,000 prisoners. A. P. Hill by brilliant tactics, frightened Hooker into a hasty retreat from before Fredericksburg, and was himself enabled to follow across the Potomac without serious delay. The corps of Longstreet passed the river without difficulty, and followed Ewell northward. Hooker, in the meantime, moving into Maryland, had taken a position near Frederick and was doing his best to obey Lincoln's order that he "fret and fret" General Lee. As the great commander gathered his army on alien soil and proceeded northward, Hooker moved in parallel column, but took good care to keep the main body of his army between Lee and the city of Washington. The manoeuvres which followed were for the time of no great consequence, and Lee's feint on Harrisburg, the State capital, was not pushed.



LEE'S HEADQUARTERS.

Stuart's Famous Ride.

But on June 25, General "Jeb" Stuart began a movement, the reason for which and the significance of which have been disputed for a generation. The cavalry had been on Lee's right, and had stood as a buffer between the Confederates and Hooker; Stuart, with his usual brilliance, had been both eyes and ears to Lee, but at this point through possible misinterpretation of equivocal orders, he went off on a raid which took him away from the main army and did not bring him to Gettysburg until the afternoon of July 2. Precisely why this raid occurred and who was responsible for Stuart's absence are military questions which, perhaps, will never be settled. Colonel Mosby, gallantly befriending his old chieftain, has written his views; Colonel Talcott has exculpated General Lee; Longstreet in his "Manassas to Appomattox" laboriously endeavors to relieve himself of responsibility.

The Armies Nearing.

Through the heated, nerve-racking days of the last week in June, Lee hunted the Federal foe and had Ewell, who had been moving in a general northward course, veered to the east and then to the south in an effort to locate the line which steadily had kept parallel to him. Robbed of Stuart's services, Lee was perhaps not as fully and regularly advised of the enemy's whereabouts as he would have been had the great cavalier been near his chief. "Where are the Yanks," demanded the baffled Confederate privates as days passed without a brush; "where are the Rebs?" questioned the Federals, with a trace of fear at the thought of their phantom-foes. In the meantime, and as the tense armies hourly drew nearer together, a new Federal commander had taken Hooker's place in the person of George G. Meade, a choleric, quick-witted man, fit to rank with the best generals of the North. Making the most of every opportunity, Meade chose and carefully surveyed one battlefield, only to find that he could not trap his matchless foe.

Gettysburg an Accident.

In a sense the clash which occurred on July 1 and precipitated the great battle on the hills around Gettysburg was an accident. Neither commander sought the field; neither would probably have chosen it had he been given the opportunity. But chance or fate or Providence willed it, and the quiet little college town saw on the morning of July 1 a skirmish which became a battle, and then the greatest conflict ever waged on American soil.

Indeed, the pressing need of shoes in the Army of Northern Virginia decided the scene of battle. Harry Heth's brave troopers, who had worn out the frail shoes issued them, were sent toward Gettysburg in the hope that they might find shoes there. As they advanced toward the little town they were discovered by the outpost of Buford's Cavalry Division, which engaged them handsomely. While Buford's men were contending every inch of ground with the advancing Confederates, Buford himself and John F. Reynolds, Meade's second in command, studied the field from the tower of Gettysburg College, and were speedily convinced that the main army must be brought up at once. Just as Reynolds was giving orders for reinforcements from the First Corps, he was instantly killed and the command of the advance guard passed into less trained hands.

The engagement thus precipitated has been reckoned the least important of the three days' battle, but, in its real significance it was the most important. Upon its issue depended the disposition of the armies during the later fighting, and upon their disposition depended in no small way their strength. Heth's men were speedily reinforced by the main body of Ewell's Corps, marching in from the north; Buford's cavalry received support from Howard's Eleventh Corps. Before the dogged attack of these Confederates, Howard's men fell back in disorder through the town, and were on the verge of a general flight. Happily for the Federals, however, Howard had left on the crest of Cemetery Hill, as he went forward, the strong division of Steinwehr, about which the retreating Federals rallied.

The Golden Opportunity Lost.

By this time practically the whole corps under Ewell's command was within striking distance of Gettysburg and had with it the greater part of its artillery. Before them, on the hill which dominated the entire position, was a Federal force dispirited, unprepared and suffering from the hard blows of the morning. The golden opportunity had come to hurl the strong Confederate column against Cemetery Hill before reinforcements could arrive from the Federal main army, and thus to master the situation. Why this was not known, no man knows. Instead of advancing, the brave Ewell moved up his main line, took possession of the town and, when the Federals had entirely withdrawn, went into camp for the night. Many have seen in this delay the real reason for the unsuccessful issue of the campaign, and some have been inclined to place the blame on Ewell for the repulse which came on the third day. In Ewell's defense it must be said that he was not positive either of his own strength or that of the enemy opposite him, and was acting under orders which apparently did not contemplate an immediate advance.

The Stage Set for the Tragedy.

At Taneytown, thirteen miles away, Meade learned in the early afternoon that the armies had clashed and that Reynolds had fallen. Immediately he put W. S. Hancock in command of Reynold's Corps with instructions to press forward at once and to determine if the position then held by the Federals could be maintained against Lee's main army. He hurried on, too, the strong Twelfth Corps of Slocum, gave orders for a forced march by the Second, Third, Fifth and Sixth Corps, and himself reached Cemetery Hill by 11 o'clock on the night of the 1st. Convinced that the position the army then occupied was the strongest in the locality, he made Cemetery Ridge the centre of his line and brought up all his artillery and reserves.

Flying couriers had early carried to Lee the news that his advance guard had located the enemy, and the thunders which echoed across the fields around Gettysburg had reached the trained ears of the Southern army. Without waiting for the scattered detachments, the army was moved forward as rapidly as possible, and Longstreet's Corps speedily joined the force under Ewell's immediate command. General Lee had been in the neighborhood since the forenoon, though not within reach of Ewell, and he had now to decide whether or not he would accept the gage of battle. In his official report, Lee makes it plain that he did not wish to take the offensive, or indeed, to participate in a general engagement so far from his base, but, as he wrote, "coming unexpectedly upon the Federal Army, to withdraw through the mountains with our extensive trains would have been difficult and dangerous." In the afternoon he went over the topography of the country with Longstreet, who was very loath to bring on a battle there. Longstreet, in fact, proposed that instead of attempting to take the Federal position, Lee should deploy his right, flank the Federals and take a stronger position between them and the national capital. But Lee, knowing conditions and more familiar than Longstreet with the weakness of his wagon train, hesitated to take such a step. With that daring characteristic of him in hours of danger, he looked squarely at Longstreet and said of Meade, "If he is there to-morrow I will attack him." It was the same spirit he had shown when he sent his brigades through Richmond with the bands playing that he might deceive McClellan and begin those crushing blows which sent the enemy staggering to Harrison's Landing. It was the same spirit he had shown when he ordered Second Manassas fought. It was the same spirit that had led him to decline to move back across the Potomac that memorable night after Sharpsburg, when all his lieutenants pleaded for a retreat. "If he is there to-morrow I will attack him," he again said when, later in the afternoon, the discontented Longstreet brought forward his favorite plan again.

The Position of the Two Armies.

The die was cast, the battle would be fought. As the two commanders of the army in the stillness of that night of suspense pored over the maps in their headquarters, they must have felt that the spot they had chanced upon was a fit stage for the tragedy of a nation. Around Gettysburg, the mountains give place to hill and and two parallel ridges stretch north and south. Separated at their farthest points by little more than a mile, these became the main lines of the two armies. On the westerly ridge was located the little Lutheran Seminary, which gave the ridge its name, famous forever in military annals. To the east, the Federals occupied a ridge which ended in the quiet cemetery of the little town and which was, in consequence, known as Cemetery Ridge. This ridge, says a modern writer, Hosmer, "was really shaped like a fish-hook, its line curving eastward to the abrupt and wooded Culp's Hill, the barb of the hook. At the curve the ridge was steep and rough with ledges and boulders; as it ran southward its height diminished until, after a mile or so, it rose again into two marked elevations—Round Top, 600 feet high, with a spur; Little Round Top just north." When the morning of July 2 dawned the two armies were in position along these ridges. Slocum held the position at Culp's Hill, at the cemetery; Howard was in command of a strong force, with Newton and Gibbon on his left. Sedgwick and Sykes held Round Top. Opposite them the Confederate line swept in a like arc, with Johnson opposite Slocum, Ewell in front of Howard, and Rodes in the town of Gettysburg. Then the line turned almost at right angles, and A. P. Hill's Corps fronted the ridge which Steinwehr had occupied on the first day. Longstreet fronted the Federal left, with the divisions of Hood, McLaws and Anderson thrown along the ridge. Of these, only the division of McLaws was effectively disposed for a frontal assault on the morning of the 2d. Pickett's Division, which was to bear the brunt of the third day's fighting, had not yet come up. One can best get a graphic mental picture of the situation when fighting began on the morning of the 2d by imagining the Federal line an extended right arm, with the palm and fingers turned inward. Longstreet would then be in a position facing the arm, with Ewell and Johnson occupying the position in front of the inturned fingers.

The Advance of the Second Day.

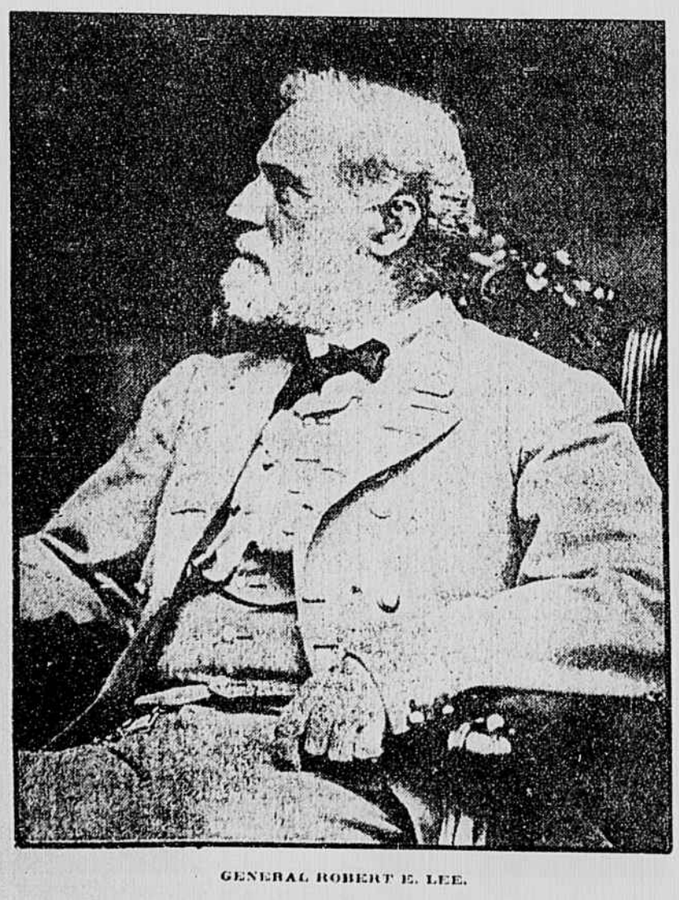
General Lee's plan was to strike with the coming of day along his whole line, Ewell to move against Culp's Hill, A. P. Hill to deliver a stinging blow at the Federal left-centre and Longstreet on the left to deliver an assault on Round Top and the Federal left. Calculating that a single direct blow would be the best means of driving back the enemy with the least possible loss, he determined to lose no time. In the forenoon, accordingly, Longstreet sent forward Hood's famous division, which had won immortal fame on a hundred fields. Following this attack he threw his whole force and that of A. P. Hill against the strong Federal position. With the courage of long discipline and with perfect confidence in their leaders, the line moved forward, failed to take Round Top only by the hasty arrival of Federal reinforcements, and then occupied a new line in the valley facing Hancock. On the Confederate left, before Culp's Hill, an even greater advantage had been gained. Though somewhat slow in making the attack, Ewell had thrown forward first a Louisiana brigade, and then the famous Stonewall Division. Before these the Federal line wilted until night found the Confederates almost in possession of Culp's Hill, close to Meade's wagon train and his reserve ordnance train. This movement, by all odds, was the most brilliant of the day's engagement, and had it been pressed a little longer in the waning hours of the long day, might have given the Confederate left a position from which they could have advanced on the flank of Meade's half circle. Many who read the story of this advance against Culp's Hill and remember the bloody valor with which the first line was taken, can never be shaken in their belief that "an hour of Stonewall" would have turned the tide.

Setting the Stage for the Last Act.

Night fell at length; a hot, oppressive, July night, which carried across the narrow valley the echoes from the rival camps and lit the summer sky with the wierd light of myriad camp fires. It was a night of waiting, of praying, of planning, of suspense. Crowded into Meade's tiny headquarters, the blue-coated generals reviewed the reverses of the day and wondered where their wizard antagonist would strike on the morrow. There was no chance safely to withdraw, no hope of victory except in hurling back the gallant brigades which they knew would come with the light. By unanimous vote, the Federals determined to fight it out on the ground they occupied and to strengthen the centre against the attack which they thought would be delivered there. "Your turn will come to-morrow, Gibbon," said Meade, with set jaws. "To-day he has struck the flanks; next it will be the centre."

In the Confederate Camp.

Across the valley there was no general council of war, and the plan of attack remained unchanged. With the daylight, Longstreet was to begin the attack on the Confederate right, and this, renewed along the line, was to be accompanied by a strong advance by Ewell and his men. There were, however, both discouraging and cheering intelligence from the division commanders, who reported to Lee during the evening. Stuart's cavalry had arrived, and had been posted to strengthen Jenkins's 3,000 on the left. Better still, the remaining brigades of Longstreet's Division had come up, and, in particular, the three seasoned brigades of Pickett's staunch division were in place. Only when the ordnance officers looked at their depleted ammunition chests and reckoned almost to a minute how long their scant supply would last, was there doubt in the brave hearts of the Southern leaders. A front assault, such as was necessary to rout Meade, would be impossible without abundant ammunition—how could that be had when the



GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE.

GENERAL LEE ON TRAVELER.